

CONSOLIDATING THE WESTERN GREAT BASIN AND EASTERN GREAT BASIN COORDINATION CENTERS



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Great Basin Coordination Center Communication Plan

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GREAT BASIN COORDINATION CENTER COMMUNICATION PLAN

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BACKGROUND

The Great Basin Geographic Area Coordination Centers (Western Great Basin and Eastern Great Basin, or WGBCC and EGBCC) are the interagency focal points for mobilizing resources for wildland fire, prescribed fire and other all-hazard incidents throughout the Great Basin, and on occasion, for other parts of the country. The centers also provide intelligence and predictive services products to wildland fire personnel.

The two separate coordination centers were established in 1993. The EGBCC in Salt Lake City coordinated fire activities in Utah, and southern Idaho. The WGBCC coordinated fire activities in Nevada and portions of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in California, plus Lake Mead National Park in Arizona and the BLM smokejumper base in Boise.

REASONS FOR THE CHANGE

The two organizations have been successful, although in times of peak fire activity, some redundancy and confusion have occurred. The interagency partners who support the coordination centers are all facing reduced budgets and improved efficiency in the future is a must. A single organization would reduce costs, without compromising service or effectiveness. That is the primary reason for the proposed change.

SUMMARY OF THE DECISION

Five options were considered:

- Status quo – continue operating two coordination centers
- Consolidate in existing facilities in Salt Lake City
- Consolidate in new facilities in Salt Lake City
- Consolidate in new facilities in Reno
- Consolidate in new facilities in Boise

After a careful and thorough analysis of the five options, the recommendation is to consolidate the two existing coordination centers in new facilities in Salt Lake City. This option has the most favorable blend of telecommunications access, while minimizing employee moves, transition costs, and providing adequate housing, community services and other amenities. The target start-up date for the Great Basin Coordination Center is January 1, 2015. Initially the GBCG was planning to open the Great Basin Coordination Center in the Spring of 2014 but the facility will not be ready until late fall.

KEY AUDIENCES

- Employees affected by the changes
- Other employees in affected locations (BLM, Forest Service, respective state agencies)
- Nevada U.S. Senators and Rep. Mark Amodei
- Some state elected officials in Nevada and Utah
- County officials, as necessary
- Nevada Department of Forestry
- Other coordination centers
- NIFC
- Other appropriate audiences as determined by local units

MESSAGES

- The main reason for the consolidation is to reduce expenses.
- Although some one-time expenses will be incurred, it's estimated that about \$305,000 a year will be saved in salary costs, with additional savings expected in lower lease rates in Salt Lake City.
- The consolidation will not cause a decrease in response time or public service.
- The process for selecting the new location was objective and thorough and involved many organizations.
- The agencies will try to keep employee disruption to a minimum, although some people may need to move. Full-time employees of the Western Basin Coordination Center will be offered new positions.
- The Great Basin Geographic Area Coordination Center is part of a national system to locate and dispatch resources for fire and other emergencies to where they are most needed.
- All agencies will pay their equitable share of expenses for the relocation and costs of operating the center.

ACTIONS AND TIMELINE

The changes will be announced to employees on Friday, September 6. That is the kickoff date for the activities listed in the timeline.

Approximate Date	Action	Responsible Party	Comment	Completion
September 4	Final consolidation decision is made by agencies	Top management for BLM (Nevada, Utah, Idaho and Arizona); BIA Western and Navajo Regions; NPS (Rocky Mountain and Pacific West Regions); USFWS (Regions 1 and 8); USDA Forest Service (Region 4) States of Nevada, Utah and Idaho	External Affairs offices for respective organizations are notified in advance to prepare or tailor public release materials	Scheduled for 9/4
September 6	Designate agency contacts for BLM in Nevada and Utah and other agencies as needed	State Directors and equivalents for other agencies		Completed on 7/24. Names listed at the end of this document.
September 6	Internal notification of agencies' regional and/or Washington offices	Local agency leadership	For BLM, Nevada will take the WO notification lead	
September 6	Affected employees are briefed about the decision.	Agency leadership and HR	Q&A and other needed materials are made available through HR and External Affairs to distribute to employees	Some materials are included in this communication packet.
September 6	Coordinate and consultation with unions	BIA and USFS management through established processes		
September 6	Other employees are notified on the decision	Agency leadership, working in conjunction with respective HR and EA offices	It will be left up to each office to determine the best means of notifying other employees	

Approximate Date	Action	Responsible Party	Comment	Completion
September 9	Briefings of key contacts, including elected officials, state agencies, other coordination centers, county officials	Agency leadership, External Affairs, fire managers	Briefing materials will be prepared by BLM's Nevada State Office EA to ensure consistency. Briefing materials will include a background paper and summary, plus a list of common questions and answers	Samples of Q&A and background paper are included in this communication packet
September 9	News release	NIFC EA drafts for appropriate tailoring and use in Nevada and Utah; other agencies/offices may use as needed.	The news release probably won't be needed in Idaho, since the consolidation is not expected to be of interest there. The news release can be posted to state office and NIFC websites.	Draft news release is included in this communication packet
Fall/Winter 2014	Reminder from Great Basin CC to other coordination centers and entities of the impending change. Can be done via e-mail, letter, through announcements at post-season and pre-season meetings.	Great Basin Coordinating Group	Will brief the National Coordinators (GACC Center Managers) and the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group at the NMAC-GMAC Meeting in January of 2014.	January 2014
December 2014	News release announcing opening of new facility	BLM Utah EA office	Send only to SLC area news media. Interest will have waned in Reno by the spring.	

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHAT IS A GEOGRAPHIC AREA COORDINATION CENTER?

When local resources for wildfire or other incidents cannot meet demands, the Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) is called. GACC dispatchers locate the resources and send them to where they are needed most. In essence, the GACCs are regional logistics and dispatch centers. Currently, there are 11 GACCs in the country. After consolidation, there will be 10 GACCs.

WHY ARE THESE CHANGES BEING MADE?

The primary reason is to save money. Agencies, whether federal or state, are all experiencing the effects of declining budgets. Consolidation of the two coordination centers into one will save a minimum of \$305,000 a year in salaries according to the analysis.

WILL RESPONSE TIME FOR WILDFIRES DECREASE?

No. We've carefully analyzed workloads and requirements for the two centers. We are confident that there will be no decrease in response time to wildfires. In fact, at times of peak activity, the single center will avoid prior instances of redundancy between the two coordination centers and may actually improve response time.

HOW MANY EMPLOYEES WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE CHANGE?

Up to four employees in Reno will be affected. They will be offered other positions.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE CURRENT FACILITIES IN RENO?

They're part of the building that houses the BLM state office and will be put to use in other ways.

ARE THE WESTERN GREAT BASIN GACC EMPLOYEES AWARE OF THE DECISION?

Yes. It is widely known in Western Great Basin Coordination Center that consolidation of the two GACCs was being studied. Agency managers have met with the employees and explained the decision and provided them with options. Employee unions were also consulted. We recognize the change may mean a move for up to four employees, but given the benefits of consolidation, we felt the decision was the correct one.

WHAT PROCESS WAS USED TO DETERMINE THAT SALT LAKE CITY WAS THE BEST LOCATION?

Five options were objectively analyzed by an interagency group. They included: maintain the status quo; Salt Lake City, using existing facilities; Salt Lake City, leasing new facilities; Reno, obtaining new facilities; and Boise, obtaining new facilities. Specific criteria for the location included:

- (1) Provide safety of the public and firefighters through efficient coordination of resources
- (2) Located in a town near a BLM state office or Forest Service regional office
- (3) Proximity to an airport
- (4) Technological capabilities
- (5) Minimal disruption to employees
- (6) Minimal transition costs
- (7) Minimal operating costs
- (8) Desirable location for the workforce

After evaluation of all these factors, a new facility in Salt Lake City was selected as the best option.

WHY WAS SALT LAKE CITY SELECTED OVER RENO?

The number of employees affected the consolidation is minimized by the move to Salt Lake City and was the highest rating factor in the evaluation criteria.

KEY CONTACTS

BLM

Nevada: Chris Rose, 775-861-6480

Idaho: Mike Morcom, 208-373-3851

Utah: Lola Bird, 801-539-4033

Forest Service

Region 4: Erin O'Connor, 801-625-5347 (Utah); Christie Kalkowski, 775-355-5311 (Nevada)

Nevada Department of Forestry

Pete Anderson, 775-684-2500

NICC/NIFC

Susie Stingley-Russel, NICC manager, 208-387-5662

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